

Sunday School

PAUL'S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY—CYPRUS.

Acts 13: 1-12.

Lesson for May 2, 1909.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."—Mark 16: 15.

DAILY HOME READINGS.

M.—Acts 13: 1-12.

T.—Isa. 6: 1-8.

W.—Isa. 40: 1-11.

Th.—Rom. 10: 6-17.

F.—Luke 10: 1-11.

S.—Deut. 18: 9-14.

S.—1 Cor. 1: 12-24.

TOPICAL OUTLINE.

The First Foreign Missionaries—

Sent forth by the Spirit, vs. 1-3.

Their first field of labor, vs. 4, 5.

A notable convert, vs. 7, 12.

Elymas struck blind, vs. 6, 8-11.

LESSON COMMENTS.

There were five men in Antioch who were leaders in the work of the church there. The majority of these, and probably all of them, came to Antioch on account of the gospel, and were in a sense non-residents. They were called "prophets and teachers." These terms doubtless had at that time no very accurately defined meaning. The prophet was a teacher, and the teacher was a prophet when he spoke by special, divine inspiration. The difference between prophecy and preaching is that the former is the utterance of a specially inspired message.

Of these five men who were directing the affairs of the church at Antioch, little is known except Barnabas and Saul. They were all Jews.

"As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted" is a statement implying some religious service in which they were jointly engaged. Probably they were met to consider the question of sending out missionaries. Up to this time Jerusalem was the base from which these had gone. And so far as we know they had gone under the scattering force of persecution, or each on his own motion, except as they were sent, like Peter and John, to Samaria, to investigate work already inaugurated. The leaders of the church were bound sooner or later to discuss some more organized methods of propagating the Gospel.

"The Holy Ghost said, separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." We are not told in what manner the message was given them. When men minister to the Lord, He is at no loss for means to inform them what His will is. Saul had been told from the beginning that his preaching was to be "far hence unto the Gentiles." To what extent he understood the import of the call we do not know. Years had elapsed and he had not yet gone to the Gentiles. Nor does it seem that this mission begun at Antioch contemplated any of the Gentiles.

The selection of the missionaries having been made by the Spirit, the church officers (if we may call them such) ordained them to this work by fasting and prayer and the laying on of hands. This doubtless was a very solemn and impressive ceremony; but it does not answer to the later ordination of church officials, except as showing that from the beginning the church followed Jewish customs and the explanation of Christian ceremonies is to be sought in the Old Testament.

They went down to Seleucia, the seaport of Antioch, situated at the mouth of the river Orontes. The distance from Antioch by boat was about forty-one miles, by land, about

sixteen miles. Their first objective point was the Island of Cyprus. In the absence of any information, we may conjecture that they went to Cyprus because of its accessibility, and mainly because it was the home of Barnabas. So far these were home missionaries. The first Cypriote city they reached was Salamis. This was a large city, inhabited by many Jews. There they had several synagogues. The gospel had already been successfully preached in Cyprus.

Barnabas and Saul confined their activities to the Jewish synagogues in Salamis. It is incidentally mentioned that they had John Mark as attendant. Probably he joined them at this place. He was a nephew of Barnabas, and while his mother had a home in Jerusalem, Cyprus was doubtless his native land.

They went through the whole island, from east to west, to Paphos, about one hundred miles.

How long they tarried at Salamis, what towns they visited in the interior and what success they had, we know not. At Paphos, the ancient seat of the worship of Venus, they met a Jew, named Bar-Jesus. The name means, the son of Joshua, and was, perhaps, not uncommon. This man called himself Elymas, which is an Arabic word, meaning, the Wise Man. He was an impostor, such as were found in numbers throughout the Roman Empire. Many of them held such positions as Bar-Jesus with Roman officials. Sergius Paulus, of an old Roman family, was proconsul. The title of this man has had a curious history. It was proven to the satisfaction of nearly everybody but the simple ones that Luke had made a mistake in calling him a proconsul, and the attempts of good men to account for the mistake and at the same time defend Luke's character as an inspired writer, make interesting reading, now that it is known that Luke made no mistake about it.

The proconsul heard of Barnabas and Saul and sent for them. Their mission was not to him, yet they were not unwilling to teach him. He was another of that type of Romans to which Cornelius belonged. The Jewish sorcerer undertook to prevent their influence with the Roman and is punished and made harmless with temporary blindness. Doubtless Paul remembered his experience when he was blind at Damascus. Blindness had been a blessing to him.

From this time Saul takes the lead in the mission and is called Paul. The name probably had been borne by him all his life. Paul was a common name in Asia Minor, and most Jews had a double name, Hebrew and Roman, or Greek. Some think he now first received it to commemorate his conquest of Sergius Paulus. Others think he assumed it in modesty as describing his littleness. Paul means, little.

W. D. Hedleston.

YOKED WITH THE MASTER.

Come unto me, the Master's voice is calling,
All ye that labor 'neath sin's yoke so galling,
And heavy laden are, and sore oppressed;
Come unto me, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon your shoulders, torn
By Satan's cruel yoke you long have worn.
And learn of me the way to wear aright
The yoke, and make the burden seem so light.

My yoke is easy, and I walk beside
You, and your erring steps will always guide;
So that, although the road be rough and steep,
We'll never wander into darkness deep.

My burden, too, is light, because the yoke
Fits snugly, and the roughnesses are broke
By leaning hard against your comrade right,
As thus we pull together, you and I.

Roanoke, Va.

G. M. M.